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Please replace the following paragraphs of the specification:

[0032] When a node 12 receives a protection message (with the TYPE field set to 1), two outcomes can happen. If the message is SETUP, then the channel-to-use field is read from the LDP packet. If the channel-to-use is already reserved by another protection path in the shared protection table 42, the working path is added to the list of working paths in the Path field for that channel. If the channel-to-use is not the currently reserved for a protection path, then the channel is reserved in the link allocation table 44 and the working path is added to the list of protected paths in the shared protection table 42.

[0044] In operation, the degree of sharing can be controlled by controlling the penalty factor in state 70. By assigning a higher factor, more shared paths will be used for protection paths. By assigning a lower factor, shorter protection paths will be encouraged. Accordingly, [[h]]as channels become more scarce, the penalty factor can be increased to lower the number of channels used for protection.